A Proposal for

The American Doomsday Machine
Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner

By

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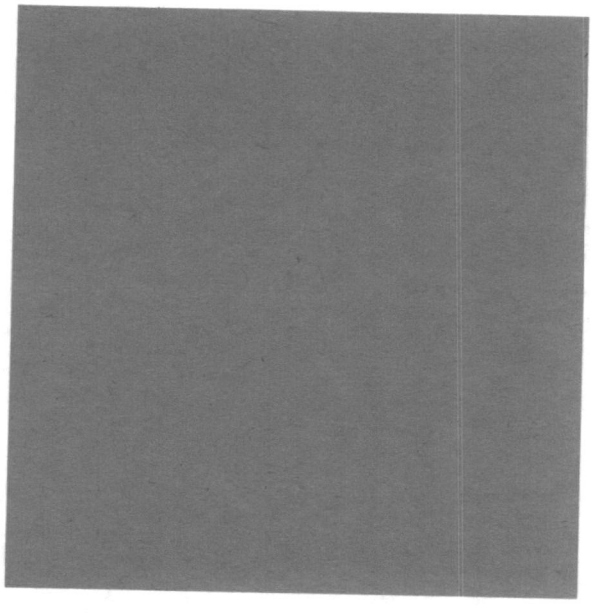


Overview

Before I worked on Vietnam in the Pentagon and Saigon, and before I released the Pentagon Papers, I worked at the highest levels of the U.S. national security system on completely different issues: command and control of nuclear weapons, plans for general nuclear war, and preventing (or if necessary, managing) nuclear Armageddon between the superpowers.

In 1961 I drafted the top secret guidance from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the operational plans for general nuclear war. The following year I was the only person to serve on two of the three working groups reporting to the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (EXCOM) during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

A year later, just before I joined the Defense Department full-time at the highest super-grade level, I was sole researcher in an interagency classified study of past US nuclear crises—including Cuba, Berlin, Offshore Islands (Quemoy), Lebanon, Suez (in which I had participated as a Marine officer with the Sixth Fleet)-- with classified access several levels above top secret.

Doomsday Machine, will include that earlier personal experience and continued research up to the present..It will be the first book ever to expose from an insider's perspective the potentially-disastrous risk-taking of U.S. nuclear policy and posture, and the secrecy system that hides these dangers from public scrutiny.

One day in the spring of 1961, soon after my 30th birthday, I was shown how our world would end. Not the Earth, not—so far as I knew then—all humanity or life, but the destruction of most cities and people in the Northern Hemisphere.

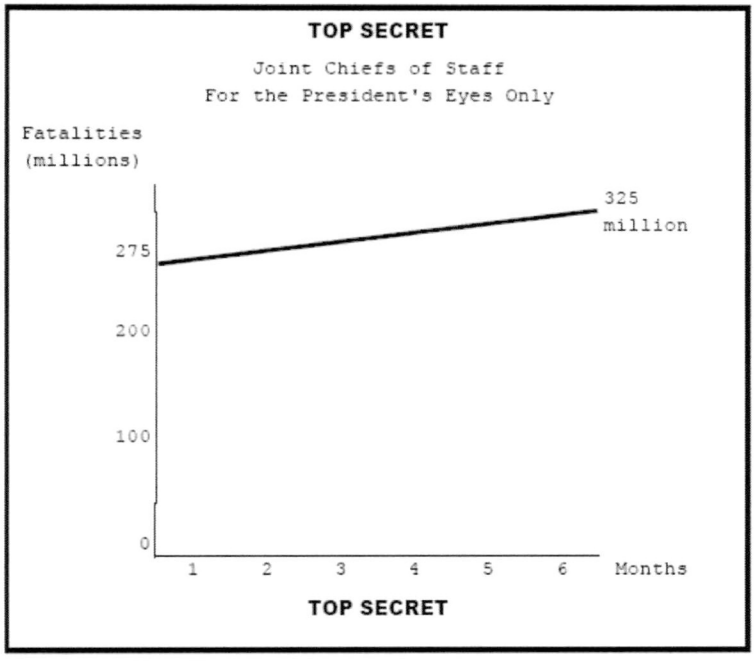
What I was handed in a White House office was a single sheet of paper with some numbers and lines on it. It was headed "Top Secret"; under that, "Joint Chiefs of Staff" and "For the President's Eyes Only." The deputy assistant to the president for national security, Robert Komer, showed it to me. A cover sheet identified it as the answer to a question President John F. Kennedy had addressed to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a week earlier.

The "Eyes Only" designation on their reply meant that, in principle, it was to be seen and read only by the person to whom it was explicitly addressed, in this case the president. Komer showed it to me because I had drafted the question, which Komer had sent to the JCS in the president's name

The question was: "If your current plans for general nuclear war are carried out as planned, how many people will be killed in the Soviet Union and China?"

Their answer, a few days later, was in the form of a graph (see representation below). The vertical axis was the number of deaths, in millions. The horizontal axis was time, indicated in months. The graph was a straight line, starting at time zero—on the vertical axis, the immediate deaths expected within hours of our attack—slanting upward to a maximum at six months, an arbitrary cutoff for the deaths that would accumulate over time from initial injuries and from fallout radiation.

The lowest number, at the left of the graph, was 275 million deaths. The number at the right-hand side, at six months, was 325 million.



That same morning, with Komer's approval, I drafted another question to be sent to the Joint Chiefs over the president's signature, asking for a total breakdown of global deaths from our own attacks, to include not only the whole Sino-Soviet bloc, but all other countries that would be affected by fallout. Again their answer was prompt. Komer showed it to me about a week later, this time in the form of a table with explanatory footnotes.

In sum, 100 million more deaths were predicted in East Europe. There might be an additional 100 million from fallout in West Europe, depending on which way the wind blew (a matter, largely, of the season). And still another 100 million deaths were predicted from fallout in the mostly neutral countries adjacent to the Soviet bloc or China: Finland, Austria, Afghanistan, India, Japan, and others, even though no U.S. warheads would explode inside their territory. Finland, for example, would be wiped out by fallout from U.S. ground-burst explosions on the Soviet submarine pens at Leningrad. The report did not include an estimate of non-fatal injuries, nor did it include casualties from any Soviet retaliatory attacks.

The total death toll as calculated by the Joint Chiefs, from a U.S. first strike aimed at the Soviet Bloc and China, would be roughly 600 million dead. A hundred Holocausts.

As it happened, I had drafted the question about these estimated deaths in the belief that the JCS did not know an answer to it. Officers I worked with in the planning staff of the Air Force were convinced that no one in national defense had ever calculated the overall human consequences of carrying out their plans. That encouraged me to ask the JCS for an estimate, in the expectation they would be forced to admit, to their embarrassment, that they could not answer it promptly.

Alternatively, I expected the Joint Staff to improvise an estimate which could easily be exposed as unrealistically low. The point of embarrassing them one way or the other was to undermine JCS bureaucratic resistance to changing their plans in the direction of new guidance I had drafted for the secretary of defense earlier that month.

But my expectations were wrong. The Joint Chiefs were embarrassed neither by the question nor by their answer. They offered it without hesitation, without apology, without explanation or excuse or offer of resignation. That was the surprise, given the answer itself, which I recognized as roughly realistic. The implications were literally existential, bearing on the nature and future of our species.

At that time I was not a critic of the explicit logic of deterrence or its legitimacy. On the contrary, I had been urgently working with my colleagues to assure a survivable U.S. capability that would threaten "clearly unacceptable damage" to the Soviet Union in response to the most successful possible Soviet nuclear attack on the U.S. But planned slaughter of 600 million civilians—ten times the total death count in World War II,? That aimed-for accomplishment exposed a dizzying irrationality, even insanity, at the heart and soul of our nuclear planning and

apparatus.

In reality, the scale of the potential catastrophe was and remains vastly greater than I or the JCS or any presidents imagined over the next 20 years. Not until 1982-83 did new calculations—recently confirmed—reveal the clouds of smoke and soot from the burning cities that
would block out sunlight for a prolonged period, lowering temperature drastically during spring and summer, freezing lakes and rivers and destroying crops worldwide. First, fire; then ice. This "nuclear winter" would starve to death billions of humans and could extinguish humanity and most forms of complex life on earth.

Yet the "option" of massive attacks on cities (or, equivalently, upon industrial and military targets within or near cities) remains to this day among the planned alternatives, ready as ever to be carried out, within the strategic repertoire of U.S. and Russian plans and force readiness. This, a quarter-century after the discovery of the nuclear winter phenomenon.

The Americans who had built this machine, knowing that it would kill more than half a billion people if it were turned on—and who were unabashed in reporting this to the president—humans like that would not fail to pull the switch if ordered. And possibly—as I found on my visits to command posts and airfields--in some circumstances without an order.

And the presidents themselves? A few months earlier, Dwight Eisenhower had secretly endorsed the blueprints of this multi-genocide machine. He had approved this "Single Strategic Operational Plan" despite reportedly being privately appalled by its implications. He had even demanded, largely for budgetary reasons (!), that there be no other plan for fighting Russians anywhere and under any circumstances. And the Joint Chiefs had responded so promptly to the question about the human impact of our planned attacks because they clearly presumed that John Kennedy would neither fire them nor order the machine to be
dismantled. In that, it turned out, they were right.

Surely neither of these presidents actually desired ever to order the execution of these plans, nor would any likely successor want to take such an action. But they must have been aware, or should have been, of the dangers of allowing such a system to exist. Eisenhower's experience in two Quemoy crises, Kennedy's in crises in Laos, Berlin and Cuba, pointed unmistakably to possible courses of events that could lead them to launch a catastrophic pre-emptive attack. Moreover, they should have reflected on, and trembled before, the array of contingencies—accidents, false alarms, outages of communications, Soviet actions misinterpreted by lower commanders, unauthorized action—that might release pent-up forces beyond their control.

Eisenhower, I found, had chosen consciously, secretly, to accept these risks: to

impose them on humanity, and all other forms of life. It was my direct knowledge that presidents Kennedy and Johnson did likewise. So did Richard Nixon. And so has every president since, including Barack Obama.

I felt sure in 1961 that the existent potential for moral and physical catastrophe was not a peculiarly American phenomenon. I was right. A few years later, after the Soviets were humiliated by the Cuban missile crisis and Nikita Khrushchev was ousted, the Kremlin set out to imitate our destructive capacity and its dangers in every detail.

To be sure, Americans, and U.S. Air Force planners in particular, were the only people in the world who believed that they had won a war by bombing, and particularly in Japan by bombing civilians. (That disturbing story, little known to Americans, is essential to understanding what came later.)

By the end of World War II and for years afterward, there were only two air forces in the world, the British and American, that could so much as attempt to do that. But the nuclear era has put that demonic temptation—to deter or defeat an adversary by creating the capability to annihilate most of its population--eventually within the reach of a great many nations. By the spring of '61, four states (now nine) had, bought themselves that capability. Humans just like these American planners were surely at work in every nuclear weapons state producing plans
for nuclear attacks on cities.

Nor did this process rely on aberrant human beings. I knew personally many of the American planners. What was frightening was precisely that I knew they were not evil, in any ordinary sense. Nor were they individually mad: in contrast to the process and system of
which they were part. They were ordinary Americans, capable, conscientious and patriotic. I was sure they were not different, surely not worse, than the people in Russia who were doing the same work, or the people who would sit at the same desks in later U.S. administrations. I liked most of the planners and analysts I knew. Not only the physicists at RAND who designed bombs and the economists who speculated on strategy (like me), but the colonels who worked on these very plans, whom I consulted with during the workday and drank beer with at night.

That chart set me on the problem of understanding my fellow human beings and how they could have knowingly continued along this path in the light of this real potential for self-destruction of our species and of most others. I have studied and worked on this problem for the past fifty years, and in the light of this research I have come to understand many elements of that potential by now. I will be discussing these in this account.

Looking at the steady failure in the two decades since the ending of the Cold War to reverse course or to eliminate this potential for extinction by nuclear war, it is hard to avoid concluding
that it is dangerously likely to be realized in the long run.

Is that inevitable? Are further proliferations, the carrying out of some future nuclear threats, and the persistence of superpower nuclear arsenals that threaten global catastrophe a near-certainty? Is it too late to eliminate these dangers in time? Some dark days I think so, as I did that morning in the White House. Most of the time I don't, or I would not have tried as I have to reduce, postpone and ultimately eliminate them, and I would not be using my time to present this account of them.

I will describe a number of practical steps that we and Russia could take on relatively short notice that would eliminate the danger of nuclear winter and radically reduce the likelihood of lesser nuclear catastrophes, including nuclear terrorism.

I believe that one crucial missing element undermining efforts to mobilize a movement to bring about these changes has been the public awareness of the actual, secret US policies and practices and thus of the urgency of reducing ongoing dangers that result from them. A Chronicle of Madness, by means of a shocking personal narrative, aims to counter the deliberate obfuscation that has supported for more than half a century the maintenance of a wildly reckless status quo.

The basic elements of American readiness for nuclear war remain today what they were fifty years ago: thousands of nuclear weapons remain on hair-trigger alert, targeted primarily on Russian military targets, many in or near cities. The declared official rationale
for such a system has always been primarily the supposed need to deter—or if necessary respond to—an aggressive nuclear attack on the U.S. This is what I was told and what I believed when I first began classified work at the RAND Corporation. That declared policy is a deliberate deception: as I discovered in reading successively higher and more secret planning
documents and directives. In this memoir, I will tell the story of how I learned that:

• Contrary to the widely-believed public rationale, deterring a surprise Soviet nuclear attack—or responding to such an attack—has never been the only or even the primary purpose of these plans and preparations. The nature, scale and posture of our strategic nuclear forces has always been shaped by the requirements of quite different purposes: above all, the capacity to make credible threats of nuclear escalation or first-strike, in order
to prevail in non-nuclear conflicts.

• Contrary to the cliché that "no nuclear weapons have been used since Hiroshima/Nagasaki," American presidents have used our nuclear weapons several dozen times, mostly in secret from the public (though not from adversaries). They have used them in the precise way that a gun is used when it is pointed at someone in a confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled. To get your way without pulling the trigger is a major purpose for owning the gun. Several of these secret threats, including those in the Taiwan Straits (Quemoy) Crises, in the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Nixon's

nuclear threats to Vietnam (all to be discussed), made nuclear war a near-miss, unknown to the public.

The emphatic assertion by every major candidate in the 2008 presidential campaign that "all options are on the table" with respect to Iran and which has been reiterated by President Obama in office extends this practical use of nuclear weapons to the present moment. President Obama's recent rejection of a "no-first-use" policy in his 2010 Nuclear Posture Review continues a policy of threatening possible American initiation of nuclear war that has—outside public awareness--characterized every American administration since Truman. It is a policy protested by virtually every non-nuclear state in the world.

• Posing as it does the threat of nuclear attack by the US to every state in the world potentially in conflict with us, this U.S. persistent rejection of a no-first-use commitment has
always precluded an effective non-proliferation campaign. So it does at this time under President Obama. Indeed, it has encouraged proliferation in states hoping either to counter
these American threats or to imitate them. But other aspects of US nuclear policy, as well, have the same effects, effectively promoting proliferation. As I first learned in the Pentagon in 1964, the supposed American policy opposing "all" proliferation has been not merely ineffective but secretly, at the highest levels, a surprisingly conscious hoax.

• The strategic nuclear system is more prone to false alarms, accidents, and unauthorized launches than the public (and even most high officials) has ever been aware. This was my special focus of classified investigation in 1958-61, as I will discuss. Later studies have confirmed the persistence of these risks. The chance that this system could explode "by mistake," or by unauthorized action, taking much of the world with it, has always been a substantial risk for both superpowers. These dangers undoubtedly apply, perhaps with even higher probability, to the new nuclear states.

• With respect to deliberate, authorized U.S. strategic attacks, the system has always been designed to be triggered by a far wider range of events than the public has ever imagined. Moreover, the hand authorized to pull the trigger on U.S. nuclear forces has never
been exclusively that of the president, nor even his highest military officials. As I discovered in my command and control research in the late Fifties President Eisenhower had secretly delegated authority to initiate nuclear attacks to his theater commanders under various circumstances, including outage of communications with Washington (a daily occurrence in the Pacific) or presidential incapacitation (which Eisenhower suffered twice) . And with his authorization, they had in turn delegated this initiative, under comparable crisis conditions, to subordinate commanders. To my surprise, President Kennedy continued this secret policy. So did Presidents Johnson, Nixon and Carter. So, almost certainly, has every subsequent president, to this day. This delegation has been one of our highest national secrets. An urgent reason for
enlightening the world's public on this reality of the nuclear era is that it is virtually certain

that this same secret delegation exists in every nuclear state, including the new ones, North Korea, India and Pakistan. How many fingers are on Pakistani nuclear buttons? Probably not even the President of Pakistan knows.

• One occasion on which that delegation might well have been exercised was the Quemoy Crisis of 1958. I will discuss a top secret study of that crisis—including key aspects
never before released—revealing that the world came closer to nuclear war in that episode
than has ever been recognized.

• Thanks to revelations from the former Soviet Union, there has been growing appreciation of the extreme dangers posed by the Cuban Missile Crisis. Yet my own highly classified study in 1964—following my high-level staff participation in the crisis— unearthed never-before-revealed details that, together with the new data, demonstrate that the risks were even higher than any previous account has concluded. I will reveal for the first time how, despite the determination of both leaders to avoid nuclear war, and without either of them realizing the full dangers they were running, Cuban antiaircraft fire came literally within a hands-width of triggering the Doomsday Machines, entailing the possible end of complex life on Earth.

• These catastrophic dangers have been systematically concealed from the public. I plan to expose the workings, the surprising effectiveness and the dangers of this system of secrecy and dissimulation in more detail than has ever been done elsewhere by insiders concerned to keep their eligibility for high clearances.
A Chronicle of Madness: The American Doomsday Machine will come to be seen as an important primary document of the nuclear era, the first insider memoir to expose the horrific dangers we have been living with for fifty years, shielded from public knowledge by an anti-democratic secrecy system that few former and current officials have been willing to challenge.

The secrecy surrounding nuclear decision-making and policy and practices threatens the survival of our species. Short of that, it threatens the deaths not of thousands, but of hundreds of millions of people.

Most aspects of the US nuclear planning system and force posture that became known to me half a century ago still exist today, as dangerous as ever. The present risks of the nuclear era go far beyond the dangers of proliferation and non-state terrorism that have been the almost exclusive focus of public concern for the past generation and the past decade in particular.

In this book I will call upon my personal, secret knowledge of past planning and crises to encourage legislative investigation, declassification, unauthorized disclosures, and belated revelation by governments. I hope to provoke pursuit and discussion of these questions in Congress, the media, the U.S. public, and around the globe.

Many matters in the book have never been revealed or discussed by anyone; neither scholars, journalists nor official analysts, in open publications. A very small number of insiders and former officials—perhaps dozens—could draw on a comparable range of high-level observation of nuclear history as mine or even greater. But not one of these has written for the public about their knowledge of this subject. Higher-level officials, like Robert McNamara or presidents, have not exposed these matters at all in their memoirs. Or else, like McGeorge Bundy in his supposedly magisterial account of the nuclear era, they have deliberately and misleadingly downplayed the dangers.

Like discussion of covert operations and assassination plots, nuclear war plans and threats are taboo for public discussion by the small minority of officials and consultants who know anything about them. In addition to their own sense of identity as trustworthy keepers of these most-sensitive secrets, there is a strong careerist aspect to their silence. Such officials have
been concerned to maintain their high clearances, their access, and their possibility of being consultants after they've left service. This seamless discretion, coupled with sustained classification and systematic official lying and obfuscation has created extremely deficient scholarly and journalistic understanding and almost total public ignorance.

The hidden reality I aim to expose is that for fifty years, all-out thermonuclear war—an irreversible, unprecedented and almost unimaginable calamity for civilization and most life on earth—has been, like Katrina and the Deep Horizon oil spill, a catastrophe waiting to happen, yet on a scale infinitely greater. And that is still true today.

February 23, 2011
\Doomsday Book\Chapter Outline.1

The American Doomsday Machine:
Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Preface

At the same time I copied the 47 volumes, 7000 Top Secret pages of the Pentagon Papers from my office at the RAND Corporation in 1969-70, I also copied an even larger number of other classified documents and pages. These included the entire contents of my top secret safe. I intended to release these to Congress and the public after the publication of the Vietnam Study, probably after my first trial.

These other documents included some Vietnam studies I had done for the Nixon Administration, but mainly they consisted of my classified notes from years of Top Secret work on nuclear war planning, command and control of nuclear weapons, and participation in and studies of nuclear crises. They included verbatim extracts or copies of crucial documents, plans, studies and cables, and classified studies by others.

One of the latter was a Top Secret Kissinger study for Nixon (NSSM-3) that examined current and proposed nuclear attack options. The *smallest* attack option available to President Nixon in 1969 was calculated to kill 90 million people.

These nuclear-related data over the previous decade were what, above all, I felt called on to disclose to the American public and Congress, much more than the Vietnam Study itself. I gave priority to releasing the latter only because bombs were falling at that time on Vietnam.

I felt it was especially important for me to disclose our long-term recklessness with respect to nuclear threats and war. I was prepared and fully expected to go to prison for life, if not for the initial release of the Pentagon Papers, then for the subsequent disclosures on nuclear policy that I saw as more important (and which were much more closely guarded from public knowledge).

This did not come about, and has remained secret, because most of the nuclear documents were lost. They were buried in a field for safekeeping by my brother and subsequently displaced by a hurricane (!) It was not until my trial for the Pentagon Papers was ended that I finally accepted that our efforts to locate them were futile and that they were irrecoverable.

Forty years later, though some of these documents have been declassified in part, most of the contents of what I meant to reveal then has remained in government safes, as secret from the public and Congress as my buried copies. I now propose to disclose in as much detail as possible what I have been describing more briefly over the years to concerned members of Congress and in interviews and lectures, sometimes to captive audiences of fellow anti-nuclear resisters in jails.

Introduction: A Mass Murder Mystery (see sample chapter)

- A Joint Chiefs of Staff memo--Top Secret, Eyes Only for the President—reveals to me that the annual operational plan for general nuclear war proposes in a wide range of circumstances to kill 600 million people: Soviets, Chinese, satellite nations, West Europe and neutrals. (Later studies show this to be roughly half of the actual foreseeable deaths. Still later studies reveal their possibility of extinguishing most complex life on earth, via nuclear winter.)

- Humans—American humans—knowingly created this instrument of mass murder; some years later, the Soviets imitated it. The two Doomsday Machines still exist, on alert. The mystery: how did this come about? With what motives? What interests have maintained them? How close have they come to being triggered? Can they be dismantled?

1. The Bomb and me: first meeting

- In 1944 a class of 13-year-olds, of which I am a member, spends a week considering for a required essay what the implications would be for the world of a Uranium-235 bomb--1000 times more powerful than existing block-busters--coming into existence. We easily conclude that this would be bad news for humanity, no matter who had it first.

- Some nine months later, on August 6, 1945, I recognize the subject of our project in the headlines: the Bomb was here, and even though it was invented by Americans, it had been used already, on a city. I have a sense of dread not shared by most Americans, whose first thoughts of this weapon are that it is bringing victory and saving lives.

- Another mystery, mirroring and perhaps illuminating the larger one: how did this boy, already horrified by the terror bombing associated with the Nazis and alerted even prior to Hiroshima to the still-greater terrors of atomic weapons, grow up to become a nuclear war planner?

2. The Making of a Cold Warrior

- My senior year in high-school and early years in college, the Cold War emerges, with an engulfing ideology: Stalin=Hitler. The Truman Doctrine, Czechoslovakian coup, the Berlin Blockade (Truman's first public threats of nuclear first-use, sending B-29s to Britain), Hiss and Rosenberg, fall of China, Soviet A-bomb. Korea: US/UN response to aggression (where Eisenhower secretly threatens nuclear first-use). After student deferments, I volunteer for officer training in the Marine Corps. (During my first weeks at Quantico, Eisenhower offers nuclear weapons to the French to rescue Dienbienphu.) In 1956 I extend my two-year tour to accompany my battalion to the Mediterranean in expectation of the Suez Crisis (which brings nuclear threats from Khrushchev).

- Back at Harvard in the Society of Fellows, I continue my study of decision-making under uncertainty, the subject of my undergraduate honors thesis, and extend to an analysis of bargaining and threats. My Lowell Lectures on *The Art of Coercion* include "Theory and Practice of Blackmail" and "The Political Uses of Madness," the latter analyzing Hitler's successful threats in the Thirties and drawing an analogy to Khrushchev's current nuclear threats over Berlin.

- By invitation, I repeat that lecture to Henry Kissinger's graduate seminar at Harvard. (A dozen years later, as President Nixon is secretly enacting what he privately calls his "madman theory" by nuclear threats against North Vietnam, Kissinger recalls this lecture in my presence at San Clemente. "I have learned more from Dan Ellsberg," he tells my companion Lloyd Shearer, " than from anyone else on the subject of bargaining." Flattering, but a hair-raising allusion by the president's assistant for national security to a Hitlerian strategy.)

3. The Spectre Haunting RAND: A Nuclear Pearl Harbor

- As a summer consultant at the RAND Corporation in 1958, I join "the Wizards of Armageddon," the major theorists of deterrence: Albert Wohlstetter, Herman Kahn, Andrew Marshall, Harry Rowen and others. From classified discussion and studies, I come quickly to share their obsession: deterring a near-term Soviet nuclear surprise attack.

- The problem my colleagues and I focus on day and night: how to maintain reliably the retaliatory capability to kill as many Russians as possible—more than the Soviets had suffered in World War II-- after a Soviet surprise attack with superior missile forces, a disarming first strike that would exploit vulnerabilities Wohlstetter and the other theorists had discerned in our retaliatory capabilities.

- In effect, I join an apocalyptic cult, regarded skeptically by most of those without clearances, but buttressed by CIA estimates of an impending "missile gap" and by the sense of urgency and the charismatic brilliance of my mentors.

4. A Hair-trigger Doomsday Machine

- At RAND as a full-time employee in the summer of 1959, I am led by my academic studies to focus on a preeminent problem of decision-making under uncertainty: a president's choice of executing the nuclear war plans, or not, in circumstances of ambiguous warning or ongoing conventional war.

- In a task force studying this "nuclear command and control" problem in the Pacific theater, I become familiar—probably more so than any other civilian at the time—with the structure of plans and alert procedures for general nuclear war, and with their contradictions and peculiarities. (see sample chapter) These include:

  - Secret delegation of presidential authority to initiate nuclear war in various circumstances to theater commanders (in contrast to publicly declared policy declared to this day, asserting falsely that this authority rests solely with the president under all circumstances);

  - Sub-delegation of this authority to subordinate commanders, and simple assumption of authority at some low tactical levels. In short, many fingers on the button;

  - Lack of any plan at that time for fighting Russians anywhere without simultaneously obliterating China, along with the Soviet Bloc;

  - Lack of provision for any reserve force or alternative targeting options: all-or-nothing plans against a fixed target list, what Herman Kahn termed "spasm war" (or "wargasm");

  - Under all circumstances of general war—defined secretly as "armed conflict [involving more than a brigade or two] with the Soviet Union" (as, perhaps, over Berlin, Iran, Yugoslavia)—all planning called for the inexorable obliteration of every city in the Soviet Union and China, killing over three hundred million people;

  - "Collateral damage" to civilians from attacks on nearby military or industrial targets was regarded as "bonus," to be maximized rather than avoided, in the Soviet Union and China; and casualties from fallout in the satellites, West Europe and neighboring neutral states (Afghanistan,

Finland, Japan, India…) was accepted on the scale of hundreds of millions, for an estimated total death toll of some six hundred million;

- Plans were almost entirely premised on the desirability and expectation of a U.S. first strike, either preemptively on ambiguous warning or escalating from a limited, non-nuclear conflict: not, as in the public mind, retaliating to actual unambiguous arrival of attacking warheads;

- Contrary to public agreements with Japan, nuclear weapons were routinely aboard U.S. Navy ships in Japanese harbors, and were permanently stationed in tidal waters of Japan off at Iwakuni Marine Air Base;

- Lack of locks on nuclear weapons preventing deliberate unauthorized launch or detonation. (Such "permissive action links" first introduced under JFK for tactical and allied weapons were resisted for years by the Strategic Air Command and much longer on Navy submarines);

- Deliberate omission of any "Stop" code once bombers had been released to attack (as dramatized in the movie: *Dr. Strangelove*), making it impossible to halt an attack based on a false alarm or unauthorized action or in case of enemy surrender during the many hours of bomber flight;

- Universal disregard or bypassing of "two-man rules" meant to prevent one man from launching strikes without authenticated authorization;

- Significant possibilities of accidents involving nuclear weapons and major false alarms (both frequently experienced) and of unauthorized launch.

In sum, I discover that *Dr. Strangelove* was a documentary.

5. Confronting the Machine

- I spend the Christmas season, 1960, in a high-level task force for Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates helping design a command system to preserve presidential control under Soviet surprise attack. Nevertheless, despite my reports and recommendations on many of the above anomalies and dangers, my warnings and those of others bring about little change under Eisenhower. (Half a century later, most of my notes and files of this period are still guarded in RAND or Pentagon safes, or lost and buried under a dumpsite near Tarrytown, New York.)

- When the new Secretary of Defense under Kennedy, Robert McNamara, brings a crew from RAND, the so-called "whiz kids," to work for him at the Pentagon—including my boss at RAND Charlie Hitch and my friends Harry Rowen and Alain Enthoven—I become a consultant to the Office of Secretary of Defense,

spending up to half the year in Washington, 1961-64. I have the run of the documents on Rowen's desk.

- After briefing the president's assistant for national security, McGeorge Bundy, on most of the problems described above, he names me as a one-man investigation of the delegation of presidential nuclear authority (though ultimately, against my recommendation, Kennedy secretly continues the Eisenhower delegation and sub-delegation, "rather than reverse the decision of the Great General," as Bundy's deputy puts it).

- Rowen assigns to me the preeminent opportunity to right what I see wrong in the Eisenhower-era plans and procedures by drafting the Basic National Security Policy (BNSP), President Kennedy's top secret guidance to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the annual operational plans for general nuclear war.

- Earlier BNSP's under Eisenhower are brief, three or four pages; my thoroughgoing revision is almost twenty pages, reversing earlier policy in detail. Eventually my draft, unchanged, is issued by McNamara as SecDef Guidance to the JCS, accompanied by implementing instructions to the Strategic Air Command (also drafted in large part by me and Enthoven, with assistance from others). Changes include, among other things:

    - Alternative target systems, including presidential options to **withhold** attacks: a) on China (!); b) on Moscow (to permit war-ending. This was fiercely resisted by proponents of "decapitation"); c) on or near Soviet or Chinese cities; d) on military targets in satellite nations near cities.

    - Tighter presidential control, and survivable control by civilian authority.

    - Elimination of "bonus" civilian damage; options minimizing civilian deaths and collateral damage from fallout.

- "My" revised guidance is the basis for the operational war plans under Kennedy—reviewed by me for Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric in 1962, 1963 and 1964—and has been reported by insiders and scholars to have become the basic framework for U.S. strategic war plans ever since.

- In contrast to guidance prior to 1961, my Top Secret guidance paper has never been completely declassified. However, my own copies of it, along with my memos to the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of Defense highlighting and explaining the changes from the Eisenhower plans, survive in my possession after loss of the buried files.

- My effort to alert superiors to the dangers of stationing nuclear weapons off Iwakuni in Japan (unreflected in the records of the Secretary of Defense's Assistant for Nuclear Affairs, and lied about by the Navy) leads to McNamara's

ordering the situation changed. His directive is withdrawn after vehement protest from the Chief of Naval Operations (who asks, unsuccessfully, that I be fired from RAND).

- My urgent effort to have the President possess and read a copy of the JCS war plan (to scare him into directing radical changes) is a failure. McGeorge Bundy's request for a copy for the president is summarily rebuffed by the Joint Staff. The JCS default on a promise to accompany their oral briefing on the plan to Bundy, McNamara and Gilpatric at the Pentagon with a copy of the plan itself, though they purport to do so. When Gilpatric shows me the document they have given him, it is merely a copy of the top secret briefing, which omits crucial details of the actual plan (including the broad range of circumstances under which it is designed to be executed, exterminating the "Sino-Soviet Bloc" and much else).

- At Gilpatric's request, I draft a long set of top secret questions he sends to the JCS ostensibly relating to their briefing (actually, reflecting their real plan, which I retrieve from the Air Staff). These are designed to convey that someone working for the Office of Secretary of Defense has a detailed knowledge of "where the bodies are buried": the controversies and highly questionable compromises the JCS have so far concealed from the Office of Secretary of Defense. Thus dissimulation by them is risky, though honest answers are unthinkable. In the words of Bundy's deputy Robert Komer, on reading my list of queries in the White House: "If these were Japanese generals, they would have to commit suicide on reading these questions."

- American generals are less sensitive; after repeated requests for more time, the Deputy Secretary's questions ultimately go unanswered. But as he calculates, they end resistance to the new guidance.

- One of the questions from my list is separated out by Komer and sent to the JCS in the name of President Kennedy: "If your plans for general war are carried out as planned, how many will die in the Soviet Union and China?" This one and a subsequent question asking for the worldwide death toll, surprisingly, does get a fast answer, mentioned in the Introduction above. 600 million dead.

- I participate in a high-level Berlin Crisis Game involving high officials as players. In light of Khrushchev's belligerence and supposed ICBM superiority—he has just renewed atmospheric testing and exploded the largest warhead ever tested, equivalent to 58 million tons of high explosive—and overwhelming Soviet conventional forces in the vicinity of Berlin, the game leads some participants to conclude: "Berlin is hopeless; we have to withdraw."

- In a visit to SAC Headquarters in Omaha in August, I learn that SAC Commander Thomas Powers approves my guidance. I also learn, from the chief of SAC war plans, that Powers believes the Soviets at that time have "1000" operational ICBMs (the U.S. has 40); though, somewhat contradictorily, he has joined with

the other Chiefs in assuring Kennedy that if the Berlin Crisis should force the president to order a U.S. first strike, the U.S. would suffer no more than 10 million deaths.

- Kennedy finds this JCS estimate unreassuring: as he does a "well-designed" first-strike option with a comparable predicted result presented to him (without my knowledge) by some of my civilian colleagues. Nevertheless, in a speech on Berlin, Kennedy announces an increase in the defense budget, mobilizes reserves, and calls on Americans to build fallout shelters.

6.Collapse (and Reversal) of the Missile Gap

- In late September, 1961, a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) reports the astonishing fact, reflecting comprehensive coverage of Soviet sites by the secret program of satellite reconnaissance, that the Soviets have less than ten ICBMs. I learn in the White House that the actual number, confirmed in the next NIE, is four. Not the one thousand estimated by SAC, not the 120 or 160 mentioned as likely in the most recent NIE of June: **four**. The U.S. had ten times as many.

- In addition, we had some 60 IRBMs in range of Russia in Italy, Britain and Turkey; about 120 Polaris submarine warheads at sea; and about **2000** long-range strategic bombers (the Soviets had 192), plus about a thousand tactical bombers in range of the Soviet Union. (check numbers)

- Since 1958, NIE's have not been made available to contractors like RAND, so that RAND studies since then have reflected exclusively the high missile gap estimate of 1958—as though fixed in amber—and the still-higher Air Force estimates since then. Having read the SNIE in the Pentagon and been told the precise figure and the basis for it, I convene a top secret briefing at RAND in Santa Monica to bring department heads and project leaders into the new world. For the first time in a briefing by me, I accompany my talk with charts: large, hand-lettered sheets of briefing paper on a standing easel, each page meticulously stamped top secret at top and bottom.

    - One: "Yes, Virginia, there is a missile gap."

    - Two: "It is currently running 10 to 1."

    - Three: "In our favor."

- "How would they know?" is the first question. I can't tell them the answer to that, because I'm not supposed to know. The reconnaissance satellite program is classified higher than top secret; my being told about it is a very unusual violation of the regulations, since I don't yet have that clearance. I hope to get it (as I do) and I don't repeat the violation by telling my colleagues that the evidence is from comprehensive coverage of the Soviet Union with high-resolution satellite photographs, a program whose existence is unknown to them despite their top secret clearances.

- **No one** in that audience believes the news I bring from Washington. I am, after all, saying that all their urgent efforts of the past seven years or so have been misdirected toward illusionary problems, based on wildly false premises about Soviet motives and capabilities. They have been working furiously in a dreamworld: a nightmare, but one from which they resist awakening. The amber preserving their distorted image of reality holds firm, for months to years in Santa Monica.

7. "My" Gilpatric speech of October 1961

I draft a speech for Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric publicly exposing the myth of the missile gap and proclaiming U.S. nuclear superiority: thus ending the Berlin Crisis of 1961 but contributing to the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

8. Cuban Missile Crisis

After spending the first half of 1962 writing my Ph.D. thesis for Harvard, "Risk, Ambiguity and Decision," I am called to the Pentagon by Harry Rowen for consultation on the night President Kennedy announces the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba and his initial response of a blockade. Sleeping, when possible, on a couch in the Pentagon over the next five days, I participate in two of the three working groups reporting to the Executive Committee of the NSC (EXCOMM). That experience and my crisis study the next year leads to major findings not yet revealed—until this memoir--on the origins and ending of the crisis.

9. My Nuclear Crises Study, 1964

In addition to my major study—with interagency access to studies and data at levels higher than top secret—of the Cuban crisis, along with a number of other nuclear crises, my research in 1964 and later uncovers the U.S. **use** of nuclear weapons--as a pistol is used by pointing it, whether or not the trigger is pulled--by Presidents Truman (Iran 1946, Berlin 1948 and Korea 1950); Eisenhower (Korea 1953; Indochina 1954, Quemoy, 1954 and 1958; Lebanon/Iraq/Kuwait 1958, deterring North Vietnamese invasion of South Vietnam, 1956-60; Berlin 1958-60); JFK (Berlin 1961, Cuba 1962).

10. Joining the Pentagon

I become a full-time official (GS-18, highest civil service rank) on the day of the Tonkin Gulf hoax and attack. I learn that LBJ has secretly renewed delegation of nuclear weapons authority and intends to widen the Vietnam War--in direct contradiction to his two main campaign pledges opposing each of these, as he runs against Goldwater who publicly advocates both. I also learn that nuclear first-use attack is discussed against China 1964 (before and after its first test); against North Vietnam 1964, 1965, 1966 (recommended by Eisenhower), and 1968.

11. The U.S. "anti-proliferation" charade

After India secretly requests help with a nuclear weapons test following the Chinese explosion in 1964 (known to me as a Pentagon official at the time, never before revealed), internal discussions disclose high-level skepticism, by Secretary of Rusk in particular, about the very desirability of opposing nuclear proliferation by "our friends," like India, or even Japan or Germany. McGeorge Bundy warns that leaks of this internal deviation from our declared opposition to proliferation "would be as explosive as an atom bomb."

The ensuing high-level Gilpatric Committee rejects the Rusk position and secretly proposes an anti-proliferation program calling for major changes in U.S. nuclear posture and first-use policy. Declassified only a few years ago, it remains the best blueprint to this day for an effective campaign against proliferation led by the U.S. But LBJ secretly rejects the program, and it remains largely unfulfilled after forty-five years during which American "non-proliferation" efforts actually premised on maintaining U.S. strategic "superiority" have been essentially a hoax.

12. The Nixon "madman policy"

President Nixon enacts his "madman policy" (foreshadowed in my analyses of Hitler's threats, as known to Kissinger) in nuclear threats against North Vietnam 1969-73. His fears of my knowledge of these and other plans for escalation—plausibly known to me from my White House contacts from my work for him in late 1968 and early 1969 drafting an "Options" paper on Vietnam and questions he put to the national security bureaucracy—lead to his criminal efforts in 1971-72 to stop me from exposing his secret policy. Exposure of these criminal actions against me by his White House "plumbers" is critical to his resignation facing impeachment, making possible the ending of the war nine months later.

Epilogue

I discuss first-use threats and the "damage-limiting" preemptive first-strike strategy that supports them which persist under Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama: precluding effective anti-proliferation efforts, risking "limited" nuclear wars and maintaining on hair-trigger alert, along with Russia, Doomsday Machines that threaten the survival of all complex life on earth.

Overview

Before I worked on Vietnam in the Pentagon and Saigon, and before I released the Pentagon Papers, I worked at the highest levels of the U.S. national security system on completely different issues: command and control of nuclear weapons, plans for general nuclear war, and preventing (or if necessary, managing) nuclear Armageddon between the superpowers.

In 1961 I drafted the top secret guidance from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the operational plans for general nuclear war. The following year I was the only person to serve on two of the three working groups reporting to the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (EXCOM) during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

A year later, just before I joined the Defense Department full-time at the highest super-grade level, I was sole researcher in an interagency classified study of past US nuclear crises—including Cuba, Berlin, Offshore Islands (Quemoy), Lebanon, Suez (in which I had participated as a Marine officer with the Sixth Fleet)-- with classified access several levels above top secret.

Doomsday Machine, will include that earlier personal experience and continued research up to the present..It will be the first book ever to expose from an insider's perspective the potentially-disastrous risk-taking of U.S. nuclear policy and posture, and the secrecy system that hides these dangers from public scrutiny.

One day in the spring of 1961, soon after my 30th birthday, I was shown how our world would end. Not the Earth, not—so far as I knew then—all humanity or life, but the destruction of most cities and people in the Northern Hemisphere.

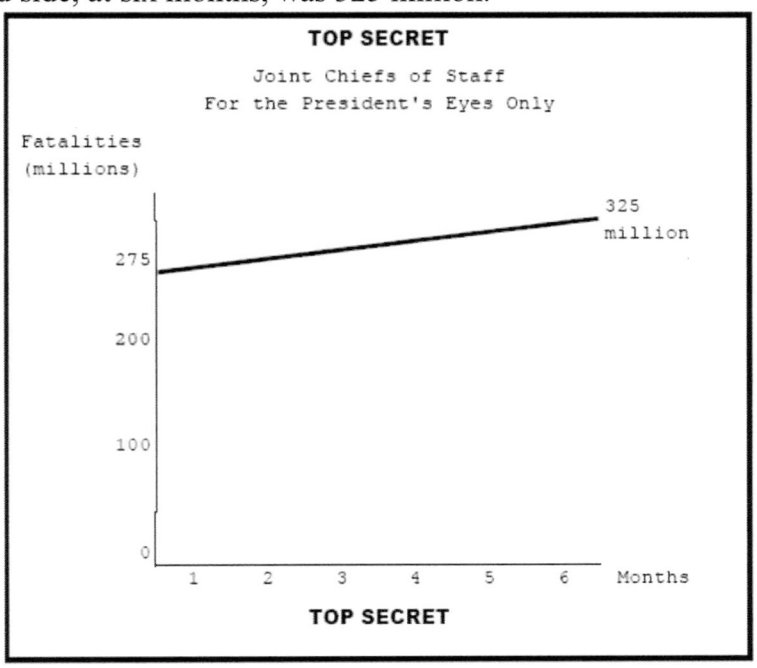
What I was handed in a White House office was a single sheet of paper with some numbers and lines on it. It was headed "Top Secret"; under that, "Joint Chiefs of Staff" and "For the President's Eyes Only." The deputy assistant to the president for national security, Robert Komer, showed it to me. A cover sheet identified it as the answer to a question President John F. Kennedy had addressed to the Joint Chiefs of Staff a week earlier.

The "Eyes Only" designation on their reply meant that, in principle, it was to be seen and read only by the person to whom it was explicitly addressed, in this case the president. Komer showed it to me because I had drafted the question, which Komer had sent to the JCS in the president's name

The question was: "If your current plans for general nuclear war are carried out as planned, how many people will be killed in the Soviet Union and China?"

Their answer, a few days later, was in the form of a graph (see representation below). The vertical axis was the number of deaths, in millions. The horizontal axis was time, indicated in months. The graph was a straight line, starting at time zero—on the vertical axis, the immediate deaths expected within hours of our attack—slanting upward to a maximum at six months, an arbitrary cutoff for the deaths that would accumulate over time from initial injuries and from fallout radiation.

The lowest number, at the left of the graph, was 275 million deaths. The number at the right-hand side, at six months, was 325 million.



That same morning, with Komer's approval, I drafted another question to be sent to the Joint Chiefs over the president's signature, asking for a total breakdown of global deaths from our own attacks, to include not only the whole Sino-Soviet bloc, but all other countries that would be affected by fallout. Again their answer was prompt. Komer showed it to me about a week later, this time in the form of a table with explanatory footnotes.

In sum, 100 million more deaths were predicted in East Europe. There might be an additional 100 million from fallout in West Europe, depending on which way the wind blew (a matter, largely, of the season). And still another 100 million deaths were predicted from fallout in the mostly neutral countries adjacent to the Soviet bloc or China: Finland, Austria, Afghanistan, India, Japan, and others, even though no U.S. warheads would explode inside their territory. Finland, for example, would be wiped out by fallout from U.S. ground-burst explosions on the Soviet submarine pens at Leningrad. The report did not include an estimate of non-fatal injuries, nor did it include casualties from any Soviet retaliatory attacks.

The total death toll as calculated by the Joint Chiefs, from a U.S. first strike aimed at the Soviet Bloc and China, would be roughly 600 million dead. A hundred Holocausts.

As it happened, I had drafted the question about these estimated deaths in the belief that the JCS did not know an answer to it. Officers I worked with in the planning staff of the Air Force were convinced that no one in national defense had ever calculated the overall human consequences of carrying out their plans. That encouraged me to ask the JCS for an estimate, in the expectation they would be forced to admit, to their embarrassment, that they could not answer it promptly.

Alternatively, I expected the Joint Staff to improvise an estimate which could easily be exposed as unrealistically low. The point of embarrassing them one way or the other was to undermine JCS bureaucratic resistance to changing their plans in the direction of new guidance I had drafted for the secretary of defense earlier that month.

But my expectations were wrong. The Joint Chiefs were embarrassed neither by the question nor by their answer. They offered it without hesitation, without apology, without explanation or excuse or offer of resignation. That was the surprise, given the answer itself, which I recognized as roughly realistic. The implications were literally existential, bearing on the nature and future of our species.

At that time I was not a critic of the explicit logic of deterrence or its legitimacy. On the contrary, I had been urgently working with my colleagues to assure a survivable U.S. capability that would threaten "clearly unacceptable damage" to the Soviet Union in response to the most successful possible Soviet nuclear attack on the U.S. But planned slaughter of 600 million civilians—ten times the total death count in World War II,? That aimed-for accomplishment exposed a dizzying irrationality, even insanity, at the heart and soul of our nuclear planning and

apparatus.

In reality, the scale of the potential catastrophe was and remains vastly greater than I or the JCS or any presidents imagined over the next 20 years. Not until 1982-83 did new calculations—recently confirmed—reveal the clouds of smoke and soot from the burning cities that
would block out sunlight for a prolonged period, lowering temperature drastically during spring and summer, freezing lakes and rivers and destroying crops worldwide. First, fire; then ice. This "nuclear winter" would starve to death billions of humans and could extinguish humanity and most forms of complex life on earth.

Yet the "option" of massive attacks on cities (or, equivalently, upon industrial and military targets within or near cities) remains to this day among the planned alternatives, ready as ever to be carried out, within the strategic repertoire of U.S. and Russian plans and force readiness. This, a quarter-century after the discovery of the nuclear winter phenomenon.

The Americans who had built this machine, knowing that it would kill more than half a billion people if it were turned on—and who were unabashed in reporting this to the president—humans like that would not fail to pull the switch if ordered. And possibly—as I found on my visits to command posts and airfields--in some circumstances without an order.

And the presidents themselves? A few months earlier, Dwight Eisenhower had secretly endorsed the blueprints of this multi-genocide machine. He had approved this "Single Strategic Operational Plan" despite reportedly being privately appalled by its implications. He had even demanded, largely for budgetary reasons (!), that there be no other plan for fighting Russians anywhere and under any circumstances. And the Joint Chiefs had responded so promptly to the question about the human impact of our planned attacks because they clearly presumed that John Kennedy would neither fire them nor order the machine to be
dismantled. In that, it turned out, they were right.

Surely neither of these presidents actually desired ever to order the execution of these plans, nor would any likely successor want to take such an action. But they must have been aware, or should have been, of the dangers of allowing such a system to exist. Eisenhower's experience in two Quemoy crises, Kennedy's in crises in Laos, Berlin and Cuba, pointed unmistakably to possible courses of events that could lead them to launch a catastrophic pre-emptive attack. Moreover, they should have reflected on, and trembled before, the array of contingencies—accidents, false alarms, outages of communications, Soviet actions misinterpreted by lower commanders, unauthorized action—that might release pent-up forces beyond their control.

Eisenhower, I found, had chosen consciously, secretly, to accept these risks: to

impose them on humanity, and all other forms of life. It was my direct knowledge that presidents Kennedy and Johnson did likewise. So did Richard Nixon. And so has every president since, including Barack Obama.

I felt sure in 1961 that the existent potential for moral and physical catastrophe was not a peculiarly American phenomenon. I was right. A few years later, after the Soviets were humiliated by the Cuban missile crisis and Nikita Khrushchev was ousted, the Kremlin set out to imitate our destructive capacity and its dangers in every detail.

To be sure, Americans, and U.S. Air Force planners in particular, were the only people in the world who believed that they had won a war by bombing, and particularly in Japan by bombing civilians. (That disturbing story, little known to Americans, is essential to understanding what came later.)

By the end of World War II and for years afterward, there were only two air forces in the world, the British and American, that could so much as attempt to do that. But the nuclear era has put that demonic temptation—to deter or defeat an adversary by creating the capability to annihilate most of its population--eventually within the reach of a great many nations. By the spring of '61, four states (now nine) had, bought themselves that capability. Humans just like these American planners were surely at work in every nuclear weapons state producing plans
for nuclear attacks on cities.

Nor did this process rely on aberrant human beings. I knew personally many of the American planners. What was frightening was precisely that I knew they were not evil, in any ordinary sense. Nor were they individually mad: in contrast to the process and system of
which they were part. They were ordinary Americans, capable, conscientious and patriotic. I was sure they were not different, surely not worse, than the people in Russia who were doing the same work, or the people who would sit at the same desks in later U.S. administrations. I liked most of the planners and analysts I knew. Not only the physicists at RAND who designed bombs and the economists who speculated on strategy (like me), but the colonels who worked on these very plans, whom I consulted with during the workday and drank beer with at night.

That chart set me on the problem of understanding my fellow human beings and how they could have knowingly continued along this path in the light of this real potential for self-destruction of our species and of most others. I have studied and worked on this problem for the past fifty years, and in the light of this research I have come to understand many elements of that potential by now. I will be discussing these in this account.

Looking at the steady failure in the two decades since the ending of the Cold War to reverse course or to eliminate this potential for extinction by nuclear war, it is hard to avoid concluding
that it is dangerously likely to be realized in the long run.

Is that inevitable? Are further proliferations, the carrying out of some future nuclear threats, and the persistence of superpower nuclear arsenals that threaten global catastrophe a near-certainty? Is it too late to eliminate these dangers in time? Some dark days I think so, as I did that morning in the White House. Most of the time I don't, or I would not have tried as I have to reduce, postpone and ultimately eliminate them, and I would not be using my time to present this account of them.

I will describe a number of practical steps that we and Russia could take on relatively short notice that would eliminate the danger of nuclear winter and radically reduce the likelihood of lesser nuclear catastrophes, including nuclear terrorism.

I believe that one crucial missing element undermining efforts to mobilize a movement to bring about these changes has been the public awareness of the actual, secret US policies and practices and thus of the urgency of reducing ongoing dangers that result from them. A Chronicle of Madness, by means of a shocking personal narrative, aims to counter the deliberate obfuscation that has supported for more than half a century the maintenance of a wildly reckless status quo.

The basic elements of American readiness for nuclear war remain today what they were fifty years ago: thousands of nuclear weapons remain on hair-trigger alert, targeted primarily on Russian military targets, many in or near cities. The declared official rationale
for such a system has always been primarily the supposed need to deter—or if necessary respond to—an aggressive nuclear attack on the U.S. This is what I was told and what I believed when I first began classified work at the RAND Corporation. That declared policy is a deliberate deception: as I discovered in reading successively higher and more secret planning
documents and directives. In this memoir, I will tell the story of how I learned that:

• Contrary to the widely-believed public rationale, deterring a surprise Soviet nuclear attack—or responding to such an attack—has never been the only or even the primary purpose of these plans and preparations. The nature, scale and posture of our strategic nuclear forces has always been shaped by the requirements of quite different purposes: above all, the capacity to make credible threats of nuclear escalation or first-strike, in order
to prevail in non-nuclear conflicts.

• Contrary to the cliché that "no nuclear weapons have been used since Hiroshima/Nagasaki," American presidents have used our nuclear weapons several dozen times, mostly in secret from the public (though not from adversaries). They have used them in the precise way that a gun is used when it is pointed at someone in a confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled. To get your way without pulling the trigger is a major purpose for owning the gun. Several of these secret threats, including those in the Taiwan Straits (Quemoy) Crises, in the Cuban Missile Crisis, and Nixon's

nuclear threats to Vietnam (all to be discussed), made nuclear war a near-miss, unknown to the public.

The emphatic assertion by every major candidate in the 2008 presidential campaign that "all options are on the table" with respect to Iran and which has been reiterated by President Obama in office extends this practical use of nuclear weapons to the present moment. President Obama's recent rejection of a "no-first-use" policy in his 2010 Nuclear Posture Review continues a policy of threatening possible American initiation of nuclear war that has—outside public awareness--characterized every American administration since Truman. It is a policy protested by virtually every non-nuclear state in the world.

• Posing as it does the threat of nuclear attack by the US to every state in the world potentially in conflict with us, this U.S. persistent rejection of a no-first-use commitment has
always precluded an effective non-proliferation campaign. So it does at this time under President Obama. Indeed, it has encouraged proliferation in states hoping either to counter
these American threats or to imitate them. But other aspects of US nuclear policy, as well, have the same effects, effectively promoting proliferation. As I first learned in the Pentagon in 1964, the supposed American policy opposing "all" proliferation has been not merely ineffective but secretly, at the highest levels, a surprisingly conscious hoax.

• The strategic nuclear system is more prone to false alarms, accidents, and unauthorized launches than the public (and even most high officials) has ever been aware. This was my special focus of classified investigation in 1958-61, as I will discuss. Later studies have confirmed the persistence of these risks. The chance that this system could explode "by mistake," or by unauthorized action, taking much of the world with it, has always been a substantial risk for both superpowers. These dangers undoubtedly apply, perhaps with even higher probability, to the new nuclear states.

• With respect to deliberate, authorized U.S. strategic attacks, the system has always been designed to be triggered by a far wider range of events than the public has ever imagined. Moreover, the hand authorized to pull the trigger on U.S. nuclear forces has never
been exclusively that of the president, nor even his highest military officials. As I discovered in my command and control research in the late Fifties President Eisenhower had secretly delegated authority to initiate nuclear attacks to his theater commanders under various circumstances, including outage of communications with Washington (a daily occurrence in the Pacific) or presidential incapacitation (which Eisenhower suffered twice) . And with his authorization, they had in turn delegated this initiative, under comparable crisis conditions, to subordinate commanders. To my surprise, President Kennedy continued this secret policy. So did Presidents Johnson, Nixon and Carter. So, almost certainly, has every subsequent president, to this day. This delegation has been one of our highest national secrets. An urgent reason for
enlightening the world's public on this reality of the nuclear era is that it is virtually certain

that this same secret delegation exists in every nuclear state, including the new ones, North Korea, India and Pakistan. How many fingers are on Pakistani nuclear buttons? Probably not even the President of Pakistan knows.

• One occasion on which that delegation might well have been exercised was the Quemoy Crisis of 1958. I will discuss a top secret study of that crisis—including key aspects
never before released—revealing that the world came closer to nuclear war in that episode
than has ever been recognized.

• Thanks to revelations from the former Soviet Union, there has been growing appreciation of the extreme dangers posed by the Cuban Missile Crisis. Yet my own highly classified study in 1964—following my high-level staff participation in the crisis— unearthed never-before-revealed details that, together with the new data, demonstrate that the risks were even higher than any previous account has concluded. I will reveal for the first time how, despite the determination of both leaders to avoid nuclear war, and without either of them realizing the full dangers they were running, Cuban antiaircraft fire came literally within a hands-width of triggering the Doomsday Machines, entailing the possible end of complex life on Earth.

• These catastrophic dangers have been systematically concealed from the public. I plan to expose the workings, the surprising effectiveness and the dangers of this system of secrecy and dissimulation in more detail than has ever been done elsewhere by insiders concerned to keep their eligibility for high clearances.
A Chronicle of Madness: The American Doomsday Machine will come to be seen as an important primary document of the nuclear era, the first insider memoir to expose the horrific dangers we have been living with for fifty years, shielded from public knowledge by an anti-democratic secrecy system that few former and current officials have been willing to challenge.

The secrecy surrounding nuclear decision-making and policy and practices threatens the survival of our species. Short of that, it threatens the deaths not of thousands, but of hundreds of millions of people.

Most aspects of the US nuclear planning system and force posture that became known to me half a century ago still exist today, as dangerous as ever. The present risks of the nuclear era go far beyond the dangers of proliferation and non-state terrorism that have been the almost exclusive focus of public concern for the past generation and the past decade in particular.

In this book I will call upon my personal, secret knowledge of past planning and crises to encourage legislative investigation, declassification, unauthorized disclosures, and belated revelation by governments. I hope to provoke pursuit and discussion of these questions in Congress, the media, the U.S. public, and around the globe.

Many matters in the book have never been revealed or discussed by anyone; neither scholars, journalists nor official analysts, in open publications. A very small number of insiders and former officials—perhaps dozens—could draw on a comparable range of high-level observation of nuclear history as mine or even greater. But not one of these has written for the public about their knowledge of this subject. Higher-level officials, like Robert McNamara or presidents, have not exposed these matters at all in their memoirs. Or else, like McGeorge Bundy in his supposedly magisterial account of the nuclear era, they have deliberately and misleadingly downplayed the dangers.

Like discussion of covert operations and assassination plots, nuclear war plans and threats are taboo for public discussion by the small minority of officials and consultants who know anything about them. In addition to their own sense of identity as trustworthy keepers of these most-sensitive secrets, there is a strong careerist aspect to their silence. Such officials have
been concerned to maintain their high clearances, their access, and their possibility of being consultants after they've left service. This seamless discretion, coupled with sustained classification and systematic official lying and obfuscation has created extremely deficient scholarly and journalistic understanding and almost total public ignorance.

The hidden reality I aim to expose is that for fifty years, all-out thermonuclear war—an irreversible, unprecedented and almost unimaginable calamity for civilization and most life on earth—has been, like Katrina and the Deep Horizon oil spill, a catastrophe waiting to happen, yet on a scale infinitely greater. And that is still true today.

February 23, 2011
\Doomsday Book\Chapter Outline.1

The American Doomsday Machine:
Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Preface

At the same time I copied the 47 volumes, 7000 Top Secret pages of the Pentagon Papers from my office at the RAND Corporation in 1969-70, I also copied an even larger number of other classified documents and pages. These included the entire contents of my top secret safe. I intended to release these to Congress and the public after the publication of the Vietnam Study, probably after my first trial.

These other documents included some Vietnam studies I had done for the Nixon Administration, but mainly they consisted of my classified notes from years of Top Secret work on nuclear war planning, command and control of nuclear weapons, and participation in and studies of nuclear crises. They included verbatim extracts or copies of crucial documents, plans, studies and cables, and classified studies by others.

One of the latter was a Top Secret Kissinger study for Nixon (NSSM-3) that examined current and proposed nuclear attack options. The *smallest* attack option available to President Nixon in 1969 was calculated to kill 90 million people.

These nuclear-related data over the previous decade were what, above all, I felt called on to disclose to the American public and Congress, much more than the Vietnam Study itself. I gave priority to releasing the latter only because bombs were falling at that time on Vietnam.

I felt it was especially important for me to disclose our long-term recklessness with respect to nuclear threats and war. I was prepared and fully expected to go to prison for life, if not for the initial release of the Pentagon Papers, then for the subsequent disclosures on nuclear policy that I saw as more important (and which were much more closely guarded from public knowledge).

This did not come about, and has remained secret, because most of the nuclear documents were lost. They were buried in a field for safekeeping by my brother and subsequently displaced by a hurricane (!) It was not until my trial for the Pentagon Papers was ended that I finally accepted that our efforts to locate them were futile and that they were irrecoverable.

Forty years later, though some of these documents have been declassified in part, most of the contents of what I meant to reveal then has remained in government safes, as secret from the public and Congress as my buried copies. I now propose to disclose in as much detail as possible what I have been describing more briefly over the years to concerned members of Congress and in interviews and lectures, sometimes to captive audiences of fellow anti-nuclear resisters in jails.

Introduction: A Mass Murder Mystery (see sample chapter)

- A Joint Chiefs of Staff memo--Top Secret, Eyes Only for the President—reveals to me that the annual operational plan for general nuclear war proposes in a wide range of circumstances to kill 600 million people: Soviets, Chinese, satellite nations, West Europe and neutrals. (Later studies show this to be roughly half of the actual foreseeable deaths. Still later studies reveal their possibility of extinguishing most complex life on earth, via nuclear winter.)

- Humans—American humans—knowingly created this instrument of mass murder; some years later, the Soviets imitated it. The two Doomsday Machines still exist, on alert. The mystery: how did this come about? With what motives? What interests have maintained them? How close have they come to being triggered? Can they be dismantled?

1. The Bomb and me: first meeting

- In 1944 a class of 13-year-olds, of which I am a member, spends a week considering for a required essay what the implications would be for the world of a Uranium-235 bomb--1000 times more powerful than existing block-busters--coming into existence. We easily conclude that this would be bad news for humanity, no matter who had it first.

- Some nine months later, on August 6, 1945, I recognize the subject of our project in the headlines: the Bomb was here, and even though it was invented by Americans, it had been used already, on a city. I have a sense of dread not shared by most Americans, whose first thoughts of this weapon are that it is bringing victory and saving lives.

- Another mystery, mirroring and perhaps illuminating the larger one: how did this boy, already horrified by the terror bombing associated with the Nazis and alerted even prior to Hiroshima to the still-greater terrors of atomic weapons, grow up to become a nuclear war planner?

2. The Making of a Cold Warrior

- My senior year in high-school and early years in college, the Cold War emerges, with an engulfing ideology: Stalin=Hitler. The Truman Doctrine, Czechoslovakian coup, the Berlin Blockade (Truman's first public threats of nuclear first-use, sending B-29s to Britain), Hiss and Rosenberg, fall of China, Soviet A-bomb. Korea: US/UN response to aggression (where Eisenhower secretly threatens nuclear first-use). After student deferments, I volunteer for officer training in the Marine Corps. (During my first weeks at Quantico, Eisenhower offers nuclear weapons to the French to rescue Dienbienphu.) In 1956 I extend my two-year tour to accompany my battalion to the Mediterranean in expectation of the Suez Crisis (which brings nuclear threats from Khrushchev).

- Back at Harvard in the Society of Fellows, I continue my study of decision-making under uncertainty, the subject of my undergraduate honors thesis, and extend to an analysis of bargaining and threats. My Lowell Lectures on *The Art of Coercion* include "Theory and Practice of Blackmail" and "The Political Uses of Madness," the latter analyzing Hitler's successful threats in the Thirties and drawing an analogy to Khrushchev's current nuclear threats over Berlin.

- By invitation, I repeat that lecture to Henry Kissinger's graduate seminar at Harvard. (A dozen years later, as President Nixon is secretly enacting what he privately calls his "madman theory" by nuclear threats against North Vietnam, Kissinger recalls this lecture in my presence at San Clemente. "I have learned more from Dan Ellsberg," he tells my companion Lloyd Shearer, " than from anyone else on the subject of bargaining." Flattering, but a hair-raising allusion by the president's assistant for national security to a Hitlerian strategy.)

3. The Spectre Haunting RAND: A Nuclear Pearl Harbor

- As a summer consultant at the RAND Corporation in 1958, I join "the Wizards of Armageddon," the major theorists of deterrence: Albert Wohlstetter, Herman Kahn, Andrew Marshall, Harry Rowen and others. From classified discussion and studies, I come quickly to share their obsession: deterring a near-term Soviet nuclear surprise attack.

- The problem my colleagues and I focus on day and night: how to maintain reliably the retaliatory capability to kill as many Russians as possible—more than the Soviets had suffered in World War II-- after a Soviet surprise attack with superior missile forces, a disarming first strike that would exploit vulnerabilities Wohlstetter and the other theorists had discerned in our retaliatory capabilities.

- In effect, I join an apocalyptic cult, regarded skeptically by most of those without clearances, but buttressed by CIA estimates of an impending "missile gap" and by the sense of urgency and the charismatic brilliance of my mentors.

4. A Hair-trigger Doomsday Machine

- At RAND as a full-time employee in the summer of 1959, I am led by my academic studies to focus on a preeminent problem of decision-making under uncertainty: a president's choice of executing the nuclear war plans, or not, in circumstances of ambiguous warning or ongoing conventional war.

- In a task force studying this "nuclear command and control" problem in the Pacific theater, I become familiar—probably more so than any other civilian at the time—with the structure of plans and alert procedures for general nuclear war, and with their contradictions and peculiarities. (see sample chapter) These include:

  - Secret delegation of presidential authority to initiate nuclear war in various circumstances to theater commanders (in contrast to publicly declared policy declared to this day, asserting falsely that this authority rests solely with the president under all circumstances);

  - Sub-delegation of this authority to subordinate commanders, and simple assumption of authority at some low tactical levels. In short, many fingers on the button;

  - Lack of any plan at that time for fighting Russians anywhere without simultaneously obliterating China, along with the Soviet Bloc;

  - Lack of provision for any reserve force or alternative targeting options: all-or-nothing plans against a fixed target list, what Herman Kahn termed "spasm war" (or "wargasm");

  - Under all circumstances of general war—defined secretly as "armed conflict [involving more than a brigade or two] with the Soviet Union" (as, perhaps, over Berlin, Iran, Yugoslavia)—all planning called for the inexorable obliteration of every city in the Soviet Union and China, killing over three hundred million people;

  - "Collateral damage" to civilians from attacks on nearby military or industrial targets was regarded as "bonus," to be maximized rather than avoided, in the Soviet Union and China; and casualties from fallout in the satellites, West Europe and neighboring neutral states (Afghanistan,

Finland, Japan, India…) was accepted on the scale of hundreds of millions, for an estimated total death toll of some six hundred million;

- Plans were almost entirely premised on the desirability and expectation of a U.S. first strike, either preemptively on ambiguous warning or escalating from a limited, non-nuclear conflict: not, as in the public mind, retaliating to actual unambiguous arrival of attacking warheads;

- Contrary to public agreements with Japan, nuclear weapons were routinely aboard U.S. Navy ships in Japanese harbors, and were permanently stationed in tidal waters of Japan off at Iwakuni Marine Air Base;

- Lack of locks on nuclear weapons preventing deliberate unauthorized launch or detonation. (Such "permissive action links" first introduced under JFK for tactical and allied weapons were resisted for years by the Strategic Air Command and much longer on Navy submarines);

- Deliberate omission of any "Stop" code once bombers had been released to attack (as dramatized in the movie: *Dr. Strangelove*), making it impossible to halt an attack based on a false alarm or unauthorized action or in case of enemy surrender during the many hours of bomber flight;

- Universal disregard or bypassing of "two-man rules" meant to prevent one man from launching strikes without authenticated authorization;

- Significant possibilities of accidents involving nuclear weapons and major false alarms (both frequently experienced) and of unauthorized launch.

In sum, I discover that *Dr. Strangelove* was a documentary.

5. Confronting the Machine

- I spend the Christmas season, 1960, in a high-level task force for Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates helping design a command system to preserve presidential control under Soviet surprise attack. Nevertheless, despite my reports and recommendations on many of the above anomalies and dangers, my warnings and those of others bring about little change under Eisenhower. (Half a century later, most of my notes and files of this period are still guarded in RAND or Pentagon safes, or lost and buried under a dumpsite near Tarrytown, New York.)

- When the new Secretary of Defense under Kennedy, Robert McNamara, brings a crew from RAND, the so-called "whiz kids," to work for him at the Pentagon—including my boss at RAND Charlie Hitch and my friends Harry Rowen and Alain Enthoven—I become a consultant to the Office of Secretary of Defense,

spending up to half the year in Washington, 1961-64. I have the run of the documents on Rowen's desk.

- After briefing the president's assistant for national security, McGeorge Bundy, on most of the problems described above, he names me as a one-man investigation of the delegation of presidential nuclear authority (though ultimately, against my recommendation, Kennedy secretly continues the Eisenhower delegation and sub-delegation, "rather than reverse the decision of the Great General," as Bundy's deputy puts it).

- Rowen assigns to me the preeminent opportunity to right what I see wrong in the Eisenhower-era plans and procedures by drafting the Basic National Security Policy (BNSP), President Kennedy's top secret guidance to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the annual operational plans for general nuclear war.

- Earlier BNSP's under Eisenhower are brief, three or four pages; my thoroughgoing revision is almost twenty pages, reversing earlier policy in detail. Eventually my draft, unchanged, is issued by McNamara as SecDef Guidance to the JCS, accompanied by implementing instructions to the Strategic Air Command (also drafted in large part by me and Enthoven, with assistance from others). Changes include, among other things:

    - Alternative target systems, including presidential options to **withhold** attacks: a) on China (!); b) on Moscow (to permit war-ending. This was fiercely resisted by proponents of "decapitation"); c) on or near Soviet or Chinese cities; d) on military targets in satellite nations near cities.

    - Tighter presidential control, and survivable control by civilian authority.

    - Elimination of "bonus" civilian damage; options minimizing civilian deaths and collateral damage from fallout.

- "My" revised guidance is the basis for the operational war plans under Kennedy—reviewed by me for Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric in 1962, 1963 and 1964—and has been reported by insiders and scholars to have become the basic framework for U.S. strategic war plans ever since.

- In contrast to guidance prior to 1961, my Top Secret guidance paper has never been completely declassified. However, my own copies of it, along with my memos to the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of Defense highlighting and explaining the changes from the Eisenhower plans, survive in my possession after loss of the buried files.

- My effort to alert superiors to the dangers of stationing nuclear weapons off Iwakuni in Japan (unreflected in the records of the Secretary of Defense's Assistant for Nuclear Affairs, and lied about by the Navy) leads to McNamara's

ordering the situation changed. His directive is withdrawn after vehement protest from the Chief of Naval Operations (who asks, unsuccessfully, that I be fired from RAND).

- My urgent effort to have the President possess and read a copy of the JCS war plan (to scare him into directing radical changes) is a failure. McGeorge Bundy's request for a copy for the president is summarily rebuffed by the Joint Staff. The JCS default on a promise to accompany their oral briefing on the plan to Bundy, McNamara and Gilpatric at the Pentagon with a copy of the plan itself, though they purport to do so. When Gilpatric shows me the document they have given him, it is merely a copy of the top secret briefing, which omits crucial details of the actual plan (including the broad range of circumstances under which it is designed to be executed, exterminating the "Sino-Soviet Bloc" and much else).

- At Gilpatric's request, I draft a long set of top secret questions he sends to the JCS ostensibly relating to their briefing (actually, reflecting their real plan, which I retrieve from the Air Staff). These are designed to convey that someone working for the Office of Secretary of Defense has a detailed knowledge of "where the bodies are buried": the controversies and highly questionable compromises the JCS have so far concealed from the Office of Secretary of Defense. Thus dissimulation by them is risky, though honest answers are unthinkable. In the words of Bundy's deputy Robert Komer, on reading my list of queries in the White House: "If these were Japanese generals, they would have to commit suicide on reading these questions."

- American generals are less sensitive; after repeated requests for more time, the Deputy Secretary's questions ultimately go unanswered. But as he calculates, they end resistance to the new guidance.

- One of the questions from my list is separated out by Komer and sent to the JCS in the name of President Kennedy: "If your plans for general war are carried out as planned, how many will die in the Soviet Union and China?" This one and a subsequent question asking for the worldwide death toll, surprisingly, does get a fast answer, mentioned in the Introduction above. 600 million dead.

- I participate in a high-level Berlin Crisis Game involving high officials as players. In light of Khrushchev's belligerence and supposed ICBM superiority—he has just renewed atmospheric testing and exploded the largest warhead ever tested, equivalent to 58 million tons of high explosive—and overwhelming Soviet conventional forces in the vicinity of Berlin, the game leads some participants to conclude: "Berlin is hopeless; we have to withdraw."

- In a visit to SAC Headquarters in Omaha in August, I learn that SAC Commander Thomas Powers approves my guidance. I also learn, from the chief of SAC war plans, that Powers believes the Soviets at that time have "1000" operational ICBMs (the U.S. has 40); though, somewhat contradictorily, he has joined with

the other Chiefs in assuring Kennedy that if the Berlin Crisis should force the president to order a U.S. first strike, the U.S. would suffer no more than 10 million deaths.

- Kennedy finds this JCS estimate unreassuring: as he does a "well-designed" first-strike option with a comparable predicted result presented to him (without my knowledge) by some of my civilian colleagues. Nevertheless, in a speech on Berlin, Kennedy announces an increase in the defense budget, mobilizes reserves, and calls on Americans to build fallout shelters.

6.Collapse (and Reversal) of the Missile Gap

- In late September, 1961, a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) reports the astonishing fact, reflecting comprehensive coverage of Soviet sites by the secret program of satellite reconnaissance, that the Soviets have less than ten ICBMs. I learn in the White House that the actual number, confirmed in the next NIE, is four. Not the one thousand estimated by SAC, not the 120 or 160 mentioned as likely in the most recent NIE of June: **four**. The U.S. had ten times as many.

- In addition, we had some 60 IRBMs in range of Russia in Italy, Britain and Turkey; about 120 Polaris submarine warheads at sea; and about **2000** long-range strategic bombers (the Soviets had 192), plus about a thousand tactical bombers in range of the Soviet Union. (check numbers)

- Since 1958, NIE's have not been made available to contractors like RAND, so that RAND studies since then have reflected exclusively the high missile gap estimate of 1958—as though fixed in amber—and the still-higher Air Force estimates since then. Having read the SNIE in the Pentagon and been told the precise figure and the basis for it, I convene a top secret briefing at RAND in Santa Monica to bring department heads and project leaders into the new world. For the first time in a briefing by me, I accompany my talk with charts: large, hand-lettered sheets of briefing paper on a standing easel, each page meticulously stamped top secret at top and bottom.

    - One: "Yes, Virginia, there is a missile gap."

    - Two: "It is currently running 10 to 1."

    - Three: "In our favor."

- "How would they know?" is the first question. I can't tell them the answer to that, because I'm not supposed to know. The reconnaissance satellite program is classified higher than top secret; my being told about it is a very unusual violation of the regulations, since I don't yet have that clearance. I hope to get it (as I do) and I don't repeat the violation by telling my colleagues that the evidence is from comprehensive coverage of the Soviet Union with high-resolution satellite photographs, a program whose existence is unknown to them despite their top secret clearances.

- **No one** in that audience believes the news I bring from Washington. I am, after all, saying that all their urgent efforts of the past seven years or so have been misdirected toward illusionary problems, based on wildly false premises about Soviet motives and capabilities. They have been working furiously in a dreamworld: a nightmare, but one from which they resist awakening. The amber preserving their distorted image of reality holds firm, for months to years in Santa Monica.

7. "My" Gilpatric speech of October 1961

I draft a speech for Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric publicly exposing the myth of the missile gap and proclaiming U.S. nuclear superiority: thus ending the Berlin Crisis of 1961 but contributing to the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

8. Cuban Missile Crisis

After spending the first half of 1962 writing my Ph.D. thesis for Harvard, "Risk, Ambiguity and Decision," I am called to the Pentagon by Harry Rowen for consultation on the night President Kennedy announces the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba and his initial response of a blockade. Sleeping, when possible, on a couch in the Pentagon over the next five days, I participate in two of the three working groups reporting to the Executive Committee of the NSC (EXCOMM). That experience and my crisis study the next year leads to major findings not yet revealed—until this memoir--on the origins and ending of the crisis.

9. My Nuclear Crises Study, 1964

In addition to my major study—with interagency access to studies and data at levels higher than top secret—of the Cuban crisis, along with a number of other nuclear crises, my research in 1964 and later uncovers the U.S. **use** of nuclear weapons--as a pistol is used by pointing it, whether or not the trigger is pulled--by Presidents Truman (Iran 1946, Berlin 1948 and Korea 1950); Eisenhower (Korea 1953; Indochina 1954, Quemoy, 1954 and 1958; Lebanon/Iraq/Kuwait 1958, deterring North Vietnamese invasion of South Vietnam, 1956-60; Berlin 1958-60); JFK (Berlin 1961, Cuba 1962).

10. Joining the Pentagon

I become a full-time official (GS-18, highest civil service rank) on the day of the Tonkin Gulf hoax and attack. I learn that LBJ has secretly renewed delegation of nuclear weapons authority and intends to widen the Vietnam War--in direct contradiction to his two main campaign pledges opposing each of these, as he runs against Goldwater who publicly advocates both. I also learn that nuclear first-use attack is discussed against China 1964 (before and after its first test); against North Vietnam 1964, 1965, 1966 (recommended by Eisenhower), and 1968.

11. The U.S. "anti-proliferation" charade

After India secretly requests help with a nuclear weapons test following the Chinese explosion in 1964 (known to me as a Pentagon official at the time, never before revealed), internal discussions disclose high-level skepticism, by Secretary of Rusk in particular, about the very desirability of opposing nuclear proliferation by "our friends," like India, or even Japan or Germany. McGeorge Bundy warns that leaks of this internal deviation from our declared opposition to proliferation "would be as explosive as an atom bomb."

The ensuing high-level Gilpatric Committee rejects the Rusk position and secretly proposes an anti-proliferation program calling for major changes in U.S. nuclear posture and first-use policy. Declassified only a few years ago, it remains the best blueprint to this day for an effective campaign against proliferation led by the U.S. But LBJ secretly rejects the program, and it remains largely unfulfilled after forty-five years during which American "non-proliferation" efforts actually premised on maintaining U.S. strategic "superiority" have been essentially a hoax.

12. The Nixon "madman policy"

President Nixon enacts his "madman policy" (foreshadowed in my analyses of Hitler's threats, as known to Kissinger) in nuclear threats against North Vietnam 1969-73. His fears of my knowledge of these and other plans for escalation—plausibly known to me from my White House contacts from my work for him in late 1968 and early 1969 drafting an "Options" paper on Vietnam and questions he put to the national security bureaucracy—lead to his criminal efforts in 1971-72 to stop me from exposing his secret policy. Exposure of these criminal actions against me by his White House "plumbers" is critical to his resignation facing impeachment, making possible the ending of the war nine months later.

Epilogue

I discuss first-use threats and the "damage-limiting" preemptive first-strike strategy that supports them which persist under Presidents Ford, Carter, Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama: precluding effective anti-proliferation efforts, risking "limited" nuclear wars and maintaining on hair-trigger alert, along with Russia, Doomsday Machines that threaten the survival of all complex life on earth.